



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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October 5, 2009

Dear Health Care Partners:

This fall, the H1N1 (swine flu) virus that first appeared last spring, is expected to make large numbers of people ill and may strain health care resources. The Washington State Department of Health, local health agencies, and health care providers, must work together to limit the impact of this new flu on our communities.

Although most people who get H1N1 will become mildly ill, some are more vulnerable. Pregnant women, infants, young children, and people with certain chronic illnesses are at higher risk. Others are vulnerable because they are isolated, need extra support, or are difficult to reach with important information. Some examples are those who are culturally or geographically isolated, people with physical or developmental disabilities, residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities, and people who have difficulty understanding English.

Please help us make sure that everyone in our state gets the information they need to avoid the flu and help lessen the effect of H1N1 on communities and the healthcare system. You can do this by promoting planning partnerships with your local public health department, emergency management agency, and other community organizations.

Here are some planning and communications materials you may find useful:

- Department of Health H1N1 Swine Flu Web site (www.doh.wa.gov/h1n1/), including answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ), which is updated weekly.
- *The At-Risk Populations and Pandemic Influenza: Planning Guidance for State, Territorial, Tribal and Local Health Departments*, prepared by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO), provides information on model approaches, sample tools and materials, and guidance on collaborating with public health partners.
www.astho.org/Programs/Infectious-Disease/At-Risk-Populations/At-Risk-Pop-and-Pandemic-Influenza-Planning-Guidance/.
- *The Washington Multicultural Health Communications Directory*, produced by the Governor's Commission on Health Disparities in May 2009, provides county-level information on the location of racial/ethnic communities, community organizations and other trusted sources, that can serve as information conduits, and specific cultural and linguistic needs of the communities. The directory can be located on the commission Web site under "Publications." <http://healthequity.wa.gov/>.



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Thank you for your help addressing the emergency preparedness needs of all people in Washington. If you have questions or suggestions related to at-risk populations, please contact Margaret Hansen, Department of Health at-risk populations coordinator, at 360-236-4026 or margaret.hansen@doh.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH
State Health Officer